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# The Undermining of Females in Video Games

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# The Undermining of Females in Video Games

Samuel West, Faculty Mentor: Prof. Bonnie Boaz

## Abstract

Video games as a form of entertainment have been rapidly evolving over the past few decades. Female presence in video games has grown exponentially along side this evolution. This paper focuses on how women are presented in games, the roles that they play within the games and their physicality while performing leadership roles. Scholarly articles have been analyzed on topics including the design of cover art used to sell games, the part that women play in the storyline, the physical nature of women in video games, and the effects sexualized women can have on the gamers.

Women have matured from the simple “damsel in distress” character into influential leaders in recent games, but at a cost. While they may be the leaders in a game, they are seen in exiguous outfits that emphasize their perfectly shaped bodies. They are hypersexualized and are often seen as objects and rewards, rather than leaders, because of their body. I argue that while women are starting to take on more leadership roles in video games; their physical portrayal completely undermines any leadership ability the character has. Research shows that these images of women have far more detrimental effects on players rather than promoting women as strong capable leaders.

## Background

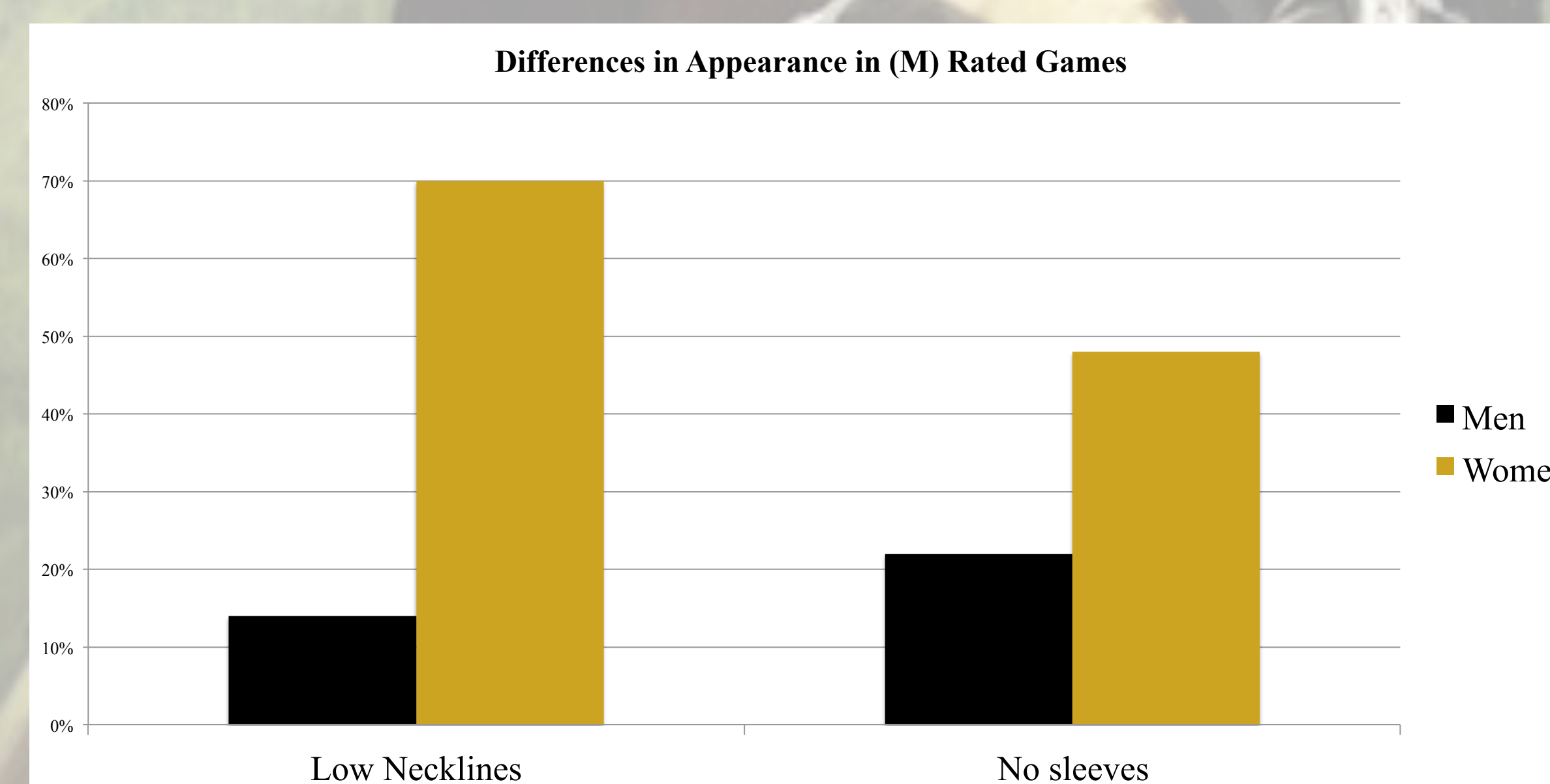
Since the beginning of the semester, we have been discussing gender in UNIV 200. The first images that appeared in my mind were of the game *Mass Effect 3*. All of the women in the game are fearless leaders who are willing to make any sacrifice to save the galaxy. But while they are fighting hordes of enemies, they are seen in outfits that emphasize their physiques and sexuality. The question that arose for me was “are these women seen more as leaders or sexual objects?”

To answer this question, I have researched a range of scholarly articles on the topic of gender in video games. The some of the topics included gender representation and sexualized content and its effects on players. In addition to the articles, I also included primary data, which is a few character analysis of women from games I have played.

Lara Croft (left) is the protagonist of the *Tomb Raider* games. She is the epitome of hypersexualization of a strong female lead character.

## Key Findings

- When women are present in video games, they are often **hypersexual** in appearance.
- Women are often used as a **reward system**
- Males that play games with sexualized females present are more likely to be **accepting of abuse and rape** of women.



- Women are seen in **provocative clothing** much more often then men are.
- **Over ¾** of women have **large breasts**.

## Character Analysis



Cortana, the artificial intelligence that accompanies Master Chief in the *Halo* saga is one of the main female characters in the game. While she is entirely inorganic being, yet her holographic projection of herself is a large breasted women with short, black hair.

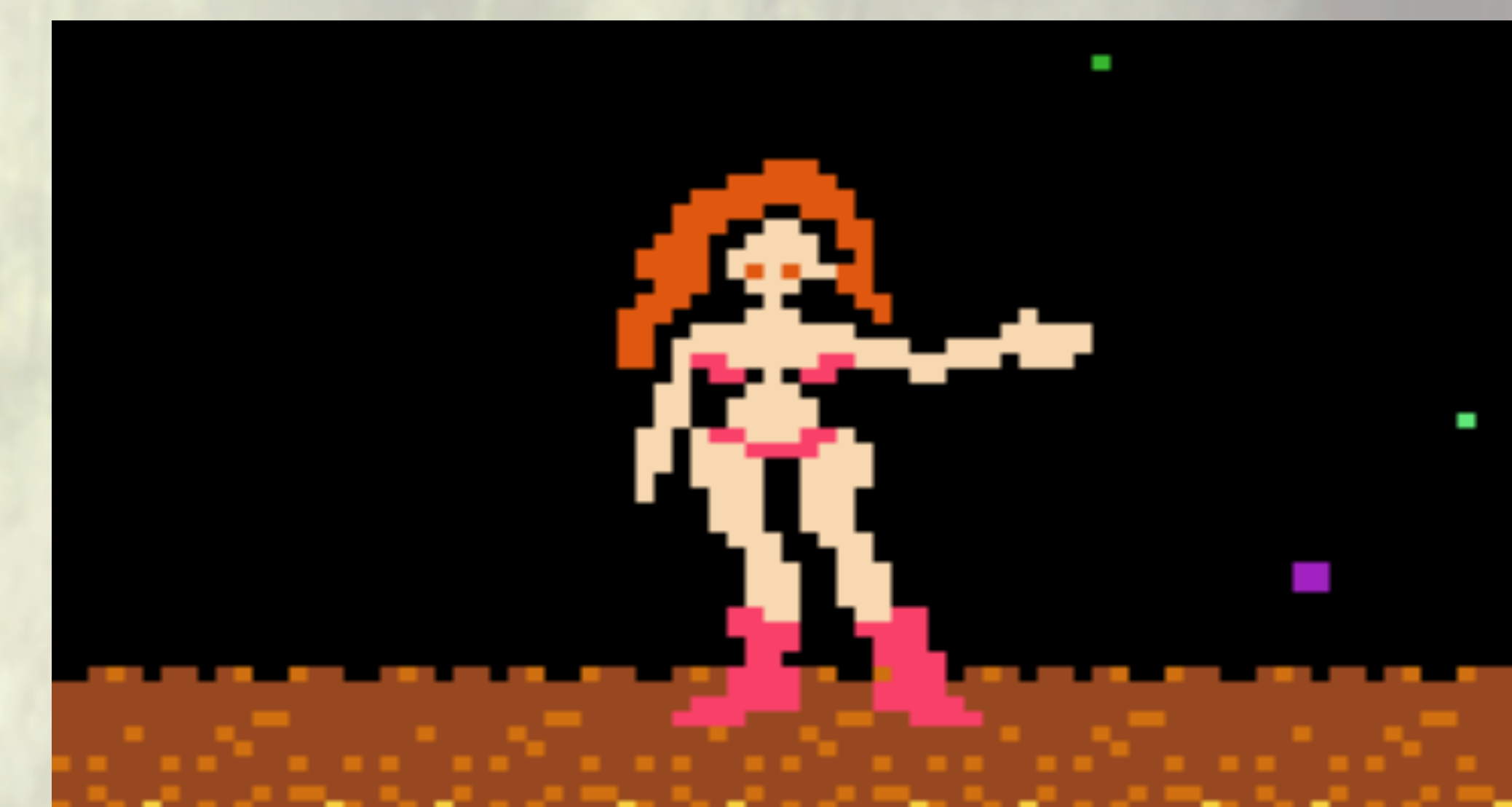
Miranda Lawson, from the *Mass Effect* trilogy is a genetically altered female to by hyper-intelligent and exceptionally beautiful. Miranda can hold her own in battle but is known for her skin tight outfits. Players can choose to pursue a relationship with her and are rewarded with the chance to see her nearly naked.



Another character from *Mass Effect*, Jack, is a powerful women with telepathic powers (called biotics in the game). Jack can be outfitted with a costume made solely of leather straps and a loin cloth – revealing far more skin than any other character in the series, in normal gameplay.



Samus Aran, from the game *Metroid*, was one of the first females to be objectified in a video game. The reward for the player finishing the game in under an hour is the chance to see Samus in a bikini.



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